WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method comprising:

loading an optical media image containing operating system code into random access memory (RAM), the optical media image being in an optical media format and representing optical media content from a physical optical media source;

accessing the optical media image in the optical media format via a RAM disk program to emulate the optical media content on the physical optical media source.

2. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the loading operation comprises copying optical media content from the physical optical media source.

3. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the loading operation comprises requesting optical media content from a remote computer.

4. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the loading operation comprises decompressing the optical media image.

5. A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising:

loading an image loader into RAM, the image loader retrieving optical media content from the physical optical media source;

retrieving the optical media content from the physical optical media source;

storing the optical media content in RAM to create the optical media image.

6. A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising initializing the optical media image in RAM.

7. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the loading operation comprises:

downloading a image loader from a first network boot server;

using the image loader to download the optical media image from either the first network boot server or a second network boot server.

8. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the loading operation comprises copying the optical media image from a hard disk.

9. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the loading operation comprises copying the optical media image from a compact disc.

10. A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising storing the optical media image on a hard disk prior to losing power to the RAM.

11. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the loading operation comprises retrieving optical media content formatted in a universal disk format (UDF).

12. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the loading operation comprises retrieving optical media content in a format based on an International Standards Organization (ISO) optical media format.

13. A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising launching an optical media file system driver operable to access a file structure in the optical media image.

14. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the accessing operation comprises redirecting an access to a location on the physical optical media source to a corresponding location in the optical media image.

15. A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising creating a disk partition containing the optical media image.

16. A method comprising:

receiving a request for optical media content stored in an optical media format and containing operating system code for booting a computer;

in response to receiving the request, enabling the computer to download the optical media content.

17. A method as recited in claim 16, further comprising identifying an operating system used by the computer based on information in the request.

18. A method as recited in claim 16 further comprising enabling the computer to download an image loader operable to download the optical media content.

19. A method as recited in claim 16 further comprising retrieving the optical media content from a compact disk in response to receiving the request.

20. A method as recited in claim 16 further comprising storing the optical media content in a universal disk format.

21. A method as recited in claim 16 further comprising compressing the optical media content.

22. A computer program product encoding a computer program for executing on a computer system a computer process, the computer process comprising:

loading an optical media image into random access memory (RAM), the optical media image being in an optical media format, the optical media image representing optical media content from a physical optical media source;

emulating the physical optical media source using the optical media image.

23. A computer program product as recited in claim 22 wherein the emulating operation comprises accessing the optical media image with a RAM disk program.

24. A computer program product as recited in claim 22 wherein the emulating operation comprises:

receiving a request to access a file at a location on the physical optical media source;

determining a location in the optical media image corresponding to the location of the file on the physical optical media source;

accessing the optical media image at the location in the optical media image.

25. A computer program product as recited in claim 22, the process further comprising loading a boot loader into RAM, the boot loader being operable to load the optical media image into RAM.

26. A computer program product as recited in claim 22 wherein the loading operation comprises requesting the optical media content from a remote computer.

27. A computer program product as recited in claim 22 wherein the loading operation comprises copying the optical media content from a compact disk.

28. A computer program product as recited in claim 22, the process further comprising decompressing the optical media content.

29. A computer program product as recited in claim 22 wherein the loading operation comprises copying the optical media content from a hard disk.

30. A computer program product as recited in claim 22 wherein the loading operation comprises copying the optical media content from a hard disk, the process further comprising:

overwriting the optical media content on the hard disk;

copying the optical media image back to the hard disk prior to losing power to RAM.

31. A system comprising:

an optical media image stored in random access memory (RAM), the optical media image being in an optical media format, and including operating system (OS) code executable by a microprocessor;

a RAM disk program operable to access the optical media image according to the optical media format.

32. A system as recited in claim 31 wherein the optical media format is a universal disk format.

33. A system as recited in claim 31 wherein the optical media image further includes an optical media file system.

34. A system as recited in claim 31 further comprising an optical media file system driver operable to manage files stored in the optical media image.

35. A system as recited in claim 31 further comprising a boot loader operable to load the optical media image into RAM.

36. A system as recited in claim 31 further comprising a boot loader operable to request optical media content from a remote optical media image

source and copy the optical media image into RAM to create a representation of the optical media source.

37. A system for booting a computer comprising:

an optical media image stored in a random access memory (RAM) and including operating system (OS) code, the optical media image representing optical media content on a physical optical media content source;

means for accessing the optical media image to cause the computer to boot.

38. A system as recited in claim 37 wherein the means for accessing the optical media image comprises a RAM disk program stored in the RAM.

39 A system as recited in claim 37 wherein the means for accessing the optical media comprises:

an optical media file system driver operable to determine a memory location in the optical media image corresponding to a memory location in the optical media content on the physical optical media content source;

a RAM disk program operable to access the memory location in the optical media image.